



Wisconsin  
Department of Health Services

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To: Local Agent Health Departments  
Food Safety and Recreational Licensing Sanitarians  
Dept of Safety and Professional Services

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Subject: **The Regulation of Float Tanks**

**Comparable Compliance for Float Tank Licensing under Wis. Admin. Code § DHS 172.**

The purpose of this policy is to set forth the minimum requirements for floatation tanks which do not comply with all regulations in DHS 172.

**DHS 172.03 Approved comparable compliance.** (1) The department may approve an alternative to a method, practice, material, equipment or design required under this chapter that will not be contrary to public health, safety or welfare, if the department is provided with satisfactory proof that the alternative will achieve results which are closely equivalent to the results of literal application of the requirement. (2) An alternative approved under sub. (1) may, at the department's discretion, be made conditional for any of the following: (a) A defined period of time. (b) Experimental or trial purposes.

**Definition**

A float tank, also known as floatation tank, float pod, isolation tank, isolation pod, sensory deprivation tank, and saline pod, is a small basin containing a saturated salt solution comprised of water and magnesium sulfate. It has a specific gravity of 1.23-1.3 and a water temperature around 95° F which is similar to that of skin temperature. Float tanks are used for a variety of therapy and/or relaxation purposes which provides an environment free of sound and light.

**Permit**

Each floatation tank will be licensed on a case-by-case basis. Operators shall submit materials to both Department of Safety and Professional Service and Department of Health Services for review. The float tank must be approved by both departments prior to use and meet the requirements set forth in DHS 172.05- 172.10 (Permits, Fees, Enforcement, Suspension or revocation of permit, Appeals of actions by the department, and Appeals of actions by agent health departments) and as specified in this policy. If approved, the license will be categorized as an experimental pool for a minimum of three years. The operator is required to apply for a



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variance with DHS that is specific to the design, construction, operation, and maintenance, of their float tank. If the requirements within this policy and individual variance are not met or if there is evidence to indicate a risk of the health, safety, or welfare of the public, the experimental license will be revoked.

### **Safety and Supervision**

1. Each on-site attendant shall have a valid first aid and CPR certificate from an approved program
2. Certificates shall be maintained and kept onsite for verification.
3. Effective means of two-way communication must exist between the attendant and each float room to provide emergency assistance to the patron.
4. A first aid kit and biohazard kit must be kept on-site. Both kits shall meet the requirements in DHS 172.27.
5. An emergency telephone must be available by staff or patrons to make emergency calls according to DHS 172.26 (2).
6. Float tank patrons that are 6 years old or younger must be accompanied by an adult.
7. Each patron will receive written and/or verbal instructions on the following:
  - a. How to safely enter and exit the tank
  - b. How to safely float during the float session
  - c. To thoroughly shower before and after the float session
  - d. To remove contact lenses and to not submerge eyes in saline water to avoid possible eye irritation
8. Each patron will sign a waiver that includes their name and contact information. The waiver must state the following:
  - a. Do not float if you:
    1. Have a communicable disease
    2. Have symptoms of vomiting and/or diarrhea
    3. Have an open lesion or wound
    4. Are under the influence of mind altering drugs or alcohol
    5. Recently acquired a tattoo or piercing which is not fully healed
    6. Recently had a surgery requiring an incision which is not fully healed
9. The following are a list of suggested items to include on the waiver:
  - a. Do not float if you:
    1. Recently shaved or waxed
    2. Suffer from seizures, incontinence, heart disease, or claustrophobia
    3. Have balance problems or a history of ear infections
10. A sign with a minimum of 1" lettering must be posted which includes the following rules:
  - a. Do not enter the tank if you have a communicable disease or an open wound
  - b. Do not bring food, drink, gum, tobacco, or shatterable items into the tank
  - c. Only one patron in the tank at a time
  - d. You must shower:
    1. Before entering the float tank



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2. After exiting the float tank
3. After using the toilet facilities and re-entering the float tank

### **Water Treatment Systems**

1. All design and construction must be approved by DSPS.
2. Skimmers, drains, and general design of the floatation tank must be VGBA compliant.
3. Skimmers and recirculation baskets or cartridges must be maintained according to DHS 172.11 (2) (b).
  - a. Spare baskets or cartridges must be available on-site according to DHS 172 (2) (d).
4. Flowmeters shall meet the requirements according to DHS 172.11 (5).
5. Piping of the water treatment system must be labeled according to DHS 172.11 (5m).
6. Filters must meet the requirements according to DHS 172.11 (6).
7. The recirculation system shall operate continuously, except for when the tank is utilized during a float session.
8. Turnover rate must allow a minimum of three turnovers between each patron.
9. Chemical labeling, storing, mixing, and handling shall meet the requirements according to DHS 172.12.
10. Chemical feeders shall meet the requirements according to DHS 172.13.
11. If chlorine or bromine disinfection systems are used, the operator must meet the requirements specified in Table DHS 172.14 for Swimming and Activity Pool for chlorine and bromine.
12. Any alternative disinfection system installed in the recirculation system must meet the requirements in DHS 172.15.

### **Water Quality and Testing**

1. Water quality requirements:

Disinfection	Free chlorine: 1 ppm- 10 ppm Bromine: 3 ppm- 20 ppm
Hydrogen Peroxide	20-100 ppm (ideal 20-30)
pH	7.2- 7.8
Temperature	Less than 95 degrees F
Alkalinity	60-180 ppm
Specific gravity	1.23- 1.3
Ozone	Solution: less than 0.1mg/L Atmosphere: less than 0.1 ppm
Ultraviolet	Per NSF manufacturer



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2. Water quality levels for disinfectant, pH, alkalinity, temperature, and combine chlorine when chlorine is used as the disinfectant must be measured and recorded a minimum of twice a day. Measurements must be taken before the pool is open to the public and at least one other time during the peak use.
3. Test kits used for measuring water quality must meet the requirements in DHS 172.17.
4. Float tanks that use alternative disinfection systems, such as Hydrogen Peroxide, ozone, ultraviolet, chlorine generator, or any combination of, must have water samples submitted to a certified lab every 2 weeks for coliform and Heterotrophic Plate Count for the first 6 months. After 6 months, the water sample submission schedule will be reevaluated. Water quality standards are required to meet the requirements of DHS 172.16.
5. Operators who use an approved chlorine or bromine disinfection system will be responsible for submitting water samples to a certified lab for coliform, Heterotrophic Plate Count, and total dissolved solids every 90 days until the tank is drained, cleaned, and refilled.
6. After 6 months, the water sample submission schedule will be reevaluated. All water sample results and daily testing logs must be maintained and available for review by the inspector. A log must be maintained for each float tank and include the following items listed above along with the following:
  - a. Date
  - b. Number of patrons
  - c. Alterations/modifications (i.e. addition of water, salt, repairs, fill/drain)
  - d. Initials of the float attendant
7. All reports and records shall meet the requirements according to DHS 172.31 and 172.32.
8. Water source shall meet the requirements according to DHS 172.19.

### **Operation and Maintenance**

1. Water level shall be maintained according to manufacturer's instructions of the float tank.
2. The saline solution within the tank should be completely replaced with fresh water and salt a minimum of every twelve months, or if the solution becomes cloudy, exhibits an unusual odor, or has been contaminated with fecal matter or vomit.
3. Closing criteria in DHS 172.30 must be followed.
4. The interior of the float tank shall be cleaned and sanitized with an approved sanitizer a minimum of once per week and as often as needed.
5. Any modifications or replacement of equipment must be approved by DSPS and DHS prior to operation.
6. Floors, walls, ceilings in the float room must be maintained in a clean and sanitary condition according to DHS 172.33 (1) (c).
7. Any shower or toilet room shall be maintained according to DHS 172.33 (2).
8. Water heaters, ventilation, electrical equipment, and lighting shall meet the requirements in DHS 172.33 (4).
9. Adequate lighting must be provided to supply sufficient visibility when cleaning and when the patrons shower, enter, or exit the float tank.



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